

**Government Response to the Report of the Education and Science Select Committee,
on its Inquiry into the identification and support for students with the significant
challenges of dyslexia, dyspraxia and autism spectrum disorders in primary and
secondary schools**

Presented to the House of Representatives in accordance with Standing Order 252

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Introduction

The Government welcomes the Education and Science Select Committee report on its inquiry into the identification and support for students with the significant challenges of dyslexia, dyspraxia and autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in primary and secondary schools.

The Committee's report represents a significant contribution to the work being done to support the achievement of all students, including students with additional learning needs.

The Committee's report summarises a comprehensive inquiry informed by extensive public submissions and expert advice. The Government acknowledges the contributions of the many students, parents, teachers, academics, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and others who supported the inquiry by sharing their knowledge and experience. Submitters to the inquiry contributed to a greater understanding of how well current support services meet the needs of students with additional learning needs.

The terms of reference of the inquiry were:

- best educational practice for dyslexic, dyspraxic, and autistic students
- current screening for dyslexic, dyspraxic, and autistic students
- support available for the transition through schooling for dyslexic, dyspraxic, and autistic students, and adaptations for their learning, including special assessment conditions (SAC)
- how teacher training and Professional Learning and Development (PLD) prepares teachers to identify and support the education of students with dyslexia, dyspraxia and ASD
- the implementation of the 2008 New Zealand Autism Spectrum Disorder Guideline recommendations specific to education, to assess the level of progress.

The inquiry highlighted several key themes:

- parents need more information about what support is available, and assistance with accessing that support
- schools are variable in their approach to supporting students with additional learning needs
- the capability and capacity of teachers, teacher aides, and specialist support providers varies widely between schools.

The inquiry highlighted that significant progress has been made to improve the support for all students with additional learning needs, including dyslexia, dyspraxia and ASD, but acknowledges that work needs to be ongoing. The Ministry of Education (the Ministry)

advises that work is already underway, or planned, which includes work to strengthen inclusion, improve the PLD and support for teachers, and provide better information and support for parents.

The inquiry coincides with a broader programme of work the Ministry is undertaking called the Learning Support (Special Education) Update (the Update). Much of the feedback parents, students, teachers and others provided to the inquiry is consistent with what the Ministry heard in the consultation process for the Update.

The themes in the feedback from the inquiry support and strengthen this programme of work and the recommendations in this report are consistent with the Update work programme. The Government notes the recommendations in the Select Committee report were developed after significant cross-party discussion and collaboration, and in consultation with Ministry advisers, and are endorsed by each committee member. Where parties have disagreed with policy direction, or sought to further the recommendations of the report, they have included a minority view. The Government notes the views and additional recommendations expressed in the minority view.

The Select Committee makes 46 recommendations to Government. The Government responds to the report in accordance with Standing Order 252. The Government response to the Committee's recommendations is outlined below. The work that is currently being progressed in many areas is outlined, along with proposed additional work in other areas.

Recommendation 1

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to consider collecting the school-entry data from schools and Communities of Learning to better identify responses to possible need.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government agrees that early identification of additional learning needs is important and should take place within the first school year or, if possible, prior to school entry and continue to be undertaken by every teacher as part of their normal student assessment processes at each year level. Further work is being undertaken with the Ministry of Health to consider how to better share information about children receiving support from the Child Development Services.

The Government notes the Ministry is exploring options for achieving earlier identification and assessment and resources for literacy, language and learning needs typically associated with dyslexia, dyspraxia and ASD. For example, the proposed updated Te Whāriki, the New Zealand Early Childhood curriculum, explicitly references oral language and early print concepts to support teachers to notice, understand and respond to the learning of children in early learning settings. Teachers will be able to access resources to support their practice via a new website that will be released in March 2017.

In 2015/16 Early Intervention services and support were provided to over 14,000 children under the age of 5 years who were identified as needing additional support to learn. Regular monitoring indicates that demand for Early Intervention services is growing as early childhood teachers, parents, health professionals and others are identifying concerns earlier, with children increasingly accessing the services and support they need.

The Government notes the Ministry's continued work around how data can be more effectively used to support higher achievement for all students, particularly through Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako (CoL).

CoL are the key vehicles for providing support across the entire learning pathway for individual students and in some cases, groups of students. The Government notes the Ministry of Education, in conjunction with the major teacher unions, principal organisations and the New Zealand Schools Trustees Association developed a series of resources for CoL. Two of these, *Community of Learning – Guide for Schools and Kura* and *Tips and Starters: Working Together* provide good advice and guidance for CoL about working collaboratively and how to develop good achievement challenges. Included is guidance about students with additional learning needs. Ministry staff work closely with CoL and provide advice, information, guidance and facilitation to support CoL to develop collaborative practice and achievement challenges.

CoL enable teachers, leaders and communities to work together to share and benefit from each other's experience. By schools collaborating and sharing expertise, students' learning pathways are supported and their transition through the education system is improved.

The Government notes new resources are now available to support teachers to better identify responses to students' learning needs.

To help teachers focus on individual students' progress the Ministry has built and tested tools to map that journey, strengthen teacher judgments and show what progression looks like for reading, writing and maths. These are:

- The Learning Progressions Framework (LPF) – Years 0-10
- The Progress and Consistency Tool (PaCT) – Years 0-8.

The progress tools above are designed to give teachers a clear picture of the skills and knowledge required across the curriculum. They prompt teachers to consider what students know and what their next learning steps might be. Access to this information will ensure more timely and targeted support for students not making expected progress; in turn informing interventions at a school, CoL and system level.

The Ministry is working with the Ministry of Health to discuss the sharing of B4 School Check information to inform analysis of learning need.

Recommendation 2

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to consider increasing the funding of Intensive Wraparound Services to meet student needs.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Intensive Wraparound Service (IWS) delivers intensive support for students with the highest and most complex behavioural and learning needs.

Subsequent to the announcement of the Select Committee inquiry on 2 Oct 2015, the Government provided an extra \$8.9 million in Budget 2016 for the IWS over the next four years. This increased the number of students receiving intensive, personalised support by 50, to 335 students a year. The additional support included an extra \$1.5 million for specialised equipment and technology to help these students better access the curriculum and to learn in class.

Recommendation 3

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to extend its promotion of inclusive education information and resources to support teachers, including those who may be teaching students with needs arising from dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorder.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

In July 2016 Cabinet endorsed moves to strengthen the inclusiveness of the education system by designing one system of learning support with improved accountability, using investment analysis to better target resources and deliver services more effectively. The

approach builds on the Government's commitment to social investment principles by putting students at the centre of planning, programmes and resourcing at the same time ensuring that students already receiving learning support services continue to receive support.

The Government has a clear expectation that the education system will foster the educational achievement of every student. To achieve this expectation we need a sustainable, integrated, fit-for-purpose and inclusive education system that puts progress and success for all students at the heart of teaching and learning.

The Government acknowledges that, while the education system has become much more inclusive over recent years, the ongoing work needs to continue.

Strengthening inclusion is one of the Ministry's strategic intentions in its *Four Year Plan 2016-2020*.

Consultation during the Update process indicated that more information and support for inclusive practice in schools is needed. The Ministry is looking for opportunities to improve its provision of information, as part of its ongoing monitoring and review process. The Ministry will continue to support teachers by providing inclusive education training, PLD and online practical guidelines and information.

To support the focus on inclusive education the Ministry is providing:

- support for Boards of Trustees in the area of school governance and ensuring all students are catered for effectively and that progress is monitored
- inclusive practice self-review tools and a recommended review process. These are designed to assist school leaders and staff to consider what inclusion means for their school and how best to support students with a diverse range of learning needs. The review process and supports include surveys for staff, families and whānau and students
- a guide to using inclusive practices when designing and delivering the school curriculum. This is a key resource for professional learning and development (PLD) providers, specialist teachers and schools to strengthen inclusive practices in the classroom and wider school environment. It can be found at the following link: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Inclusive-Practice-and-the-School-Curriculum>; <http://inclusive.tki.org.nz/>
- the Inclusive Education website, [www.http://inclusive.tki.org.nz](http://inclusive.tki.org.nz) provides guidance on specific disabilities and additional information on systems and processes that ensure students with additional learning needs are catered for effectively in their schooling pathway. Site visitors remain steady at around 6,000 per month. The Ministry is developing a more extensive communication plan to increase usage.

The Ministry is continuing to expand the Inclusive Education website. In 2016 it added guides on:

- preparing students to leave school
- supporting Effective Teacher Aide Practice

- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Learning
- planning Innovative Learning Environments (ILE).

The Ministry, between February 2015 and 1 December 2016, provided workshops introducing the websites and inclusive education themes to nearly 3,000 Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB), Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), principals, deputy principals and Ministry special education/learning support staff. Feedback has been very positive and the Ministry is continuing this training in 2017.

The Government notes the Ministry plans to:

- continue to add to and enhance the existing tools it has available
- carry out a concerted publicity drive to make the tools more widely known to schools and parents
- undertake a detailed evaluation of the Inclusive Education website, which will inform site enhancements and also inform a communication plan for the site
- look at how to use the Ministry's parent website to better connect parents to the rich content that is on the Inclusive Education website
- continue capability building with a focus on supporting Ministry staff and RTLB to provide workshops in their local areas
- run workshops with Ministry property staff and architects on building ILE that work for all students.

Recommendation 4

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to develop policy on learning support needs to explicitly explain what best practice for inclusion is, and how monitoring and professional development will support this policy in all schools.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes the findings of the 2013 Education Review Office (ERO) report *Including Students with High Needs Primary Schools* are encouraging. ERO found that 77 percent of schools were mostly inclusive, 16 percent of schools had some inclusive practices, and seven percent had few inclusive practices. The Ministry is working with these latter schools to build more effective practice.

The Government also notes that on 29 November 2016, the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026 was launched. The new Strategy will enable New Zealand to better support disabled people to achieve their potential, and improve the lives of disabled New Zealanders and their families. Cabinet agreed the new Strategy will provide the mandate and guide the work of government agencies on disability issues for the next 10 years, to be led by the Office for Disability Issues.

What this means for education:

- disabled people are consulted on and actively involved in the development and implementation of legislation and policies concerning education, including early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education
- access to mainstream education is inclusive (including policy, practice and pedagogy)
- services that are specific to disabled people are high quality, available and accessible
- inclusive education is a core competency for all teachers and educators
- decision-making on issues regarding education of disabled people is informed by robust data and evidence.

The Government expects the Ministry to work with all other agencies to implement the Strategy. The Government will be working in partnership with disabled people and the disability sector to ensure the Strategy is carried out and that real changes are made. To help measure progress an Outcomes Framework which specifies the targets and indicators to achieve the aspirations of the strategy, will be developed in 2017.

The Ministry's Update programme of work is significantly redesigning the system of support for students with additional learning needs. The themes in the feedback from the Select Committee inquiry support and strengthen this programme of work and many of the recommendations in this report are consistent with the Update work programme.

The programme is:

- designing a recognisable, simple system of additional learning support
- re-designing the service delivery model to remove fragmentation, inflexibility and other barriers to effective service delivery
- implementing the revised service delivery model
- undertaking an ongoing programme of work to ensure the best use of funds and examine the return on investment for all system components.

The Ministry has implemented some changes to PLD available to CoL, schools and kura. The redesign aims to ensure:

- centrally-funded PLD is tailored to sector identified needs
- PLD will make more of a difference to student outcomes in priority areas e.g. reading, writing, mathematics, science and digital technologies
- support for school leadership is provided to lead and sustain improvement; and
- professional networks are strengthened as a complementary source of support for teachers and leaders.

Recommendation 5

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to investigate the equity of access to publically funded services for Māori and Pasifika.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes the Ministry monitors access to different specialist services by ethnicity. The Ministry, and other services such as the RTLB service, provide access to support on the basis of assessed student need.

The Government will ask the Ministry to continue to monitor and investigate equity of access across all provision of learning support to ensure that the right support gets to the right students at the right time.

The Government notes the Ministry uses data to work with schools to identify student need and raising attainment. An example of this at secondary level is At Risk of Not Achieving (ARoNA) which uses data to support system change to improve education results, in particular for Māori and Pasifika students. Through ARoNA, Ministry staff use a student focussed methodology based on NCEA achievement data to support secondary schools and the students' families to identify how individual students at risk of not achieving NCEA Level 2 can be supported to succeed in their studies.

The Government also notes evaluations of Ministry initiatives are carried out to identify what has worked well. As noted in the Ministry's 2016 Annual Report, the Ministry is currently developing an Investment Management Framework which will enable it to cost, select, manage, and evaluate investments across operating and capital expenditure so that resources are allocated to areas of highest value and benefits are tracked. This will help better evaluate and understand which initiatives are most effective for improving educational results for Māori and Pasifika students.

Recommendation 6

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to review and, as necessary, update advice about, and resources for, students with additional learning support needs.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government considers this work is part of a broader work stream that requires the Ministry to provide the best information available for parents, teachers and schools and others who are supporting students with additional learning needs.

The Inclusive Education website <http://inclusive.tki.org.nz> has been live for 18 months (see Recommendation 3).

The website provides schools, parents and students with extensive information, resources, and curriculum materials to enhance teaching and learning, raise student achievement, and advance PLD for teaching staff and school managers.

The site includes information on:

- Dyslexia (<http://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/dyslexia-and-learning>)
- Dyspraxia (<http://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/dyspraxia-and-learning>)

- ASD (<http://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/autism-spectrum-disorder-asd-and-learning>).

In addition to this there is a number of inclusive education resource materials located on the New Zealand Curriculum Online website. Placement of information on this site was a deliberate move to locate the New Zealand Curriculum as central to, and inclusive of, all students and to help teachers plan accordingly. Information on dyslexia can be found on the Literacy Online website (<http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz>) and in the booklet, *About Dyslexia*, which has been available in every school since 2007.

However, the submissions highlight that not all schools and teachers are aware of the material and resources available online. As a result of the Select Committee inquiry, the Ministry has re-visited the online support material, particularly the information provided on the Inclusive Education website, and concluded that it is, in general, fit for purpose. The Ministry is planning to promote awareness of these tools and resources through a range of ways including the Inclusive Practices workshops and the Update (see Recommendation 3).

Recommendation 7

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to develop and disseminate consistent intervention guidelines and support pathways for students with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorder.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes that improving student-centred pathways is one of the Ministry's strategic intentions in its *Four Year Plan 2016-2020*.

The Government considers this work is part of a broader work stream that requires the Ministry to provide the best information available for parents, teachers and schools and others who are supporting students with additional learning needs (see Recommendation 6).

The Government notes the information that is available on The Inclusive Education website <http://inclusive.tki.org.nz> and the New Zealand Curriculum Online website: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz>.

The Government notes the Update is designing a recognisable, simple system of additional learning support (see Recommendation 4).

The Ministry intends to develop more formal links to a range of national and international experts to ensure its policies, approaches and supports are easily accessible and coherent, and consistent with research evidence and best practice (see Recommendation 11).

Recommendation 8

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to work with Dyslexia NZ to develop a specific pathway guide for families of students with dyslexia.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government considers this work is part of a broader stream of work that requires the Ministry to provide the best information available for parents, teachers and schools and others who are supporting students with additional learning needs (see Recommendation 6).

The Ministry intends to develop more formal links to a range of national and international experts to ensure its policies, approaches and supports are easily accessible and coherent, and consistent with research evidence and best practice (see Recommendation 11).

The Government will ask the Ministry to continue working with all concerned parties, including Dyslexia New Zealand, to explore ways in which resources can be better strengthened and enhanced to provide a pathway guide for families.

Recommendation 9

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to work with Dyspraxia NZ to develop a specific pathway guide for families of students with dyspraxia.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government considers this work is part of a broader stream of work that requires the Ministry to provide the best information available for parents, teachers and schools and others who are supporting students with additional learning needs (see Recommendation 6).

The Government notes the information about dyspraxia that is available on The Inclusive Education website <http://inclusive.tki.org.nz> and the New Zealand Curriculum Online website: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz>.

The Government will ask the Ministry to continue working with all concerned parties, including the Ministry of Health and Dyspraxia New Zealand, to improve and update the information available where necessary.

The Ministry will initiate a discussion with Dyspraxia New Zealand about exploring ways in which resources can be better utilised to provide a pathway guide for families. This engagement could also provide the opportunity to look at what else could be done to support families better.

Recommendation 10

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to develop specific pathway guides for families of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, and foetal alcohol syndrome.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation although notes that students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) were not included in the initial scope of the inquiry.

The Ministry is committed to working together with the Ministry of Health, partner agencies, professionals, communities and families to implement the recently released FASD Action Plan, *Taking Action on Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: 2016-2019*. Key actions within this plan include developing accessible pathways of support for people affected by FASD and their families and whānau.

The Government notes the Ministry has educator booklets and guides on the Inclusive Education website about attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and ASD. A new guide on FASD was launched in 2016 in response to calls from teachers and RTLB for more advice on supporting students with FASD.

The guide brings together the latest research, literature and targeted strategies for supporting students to organise, plan, understand consequences, maintain and shift attention, and memorise data.

The Government expects the Ministry to continue to work with all concerned parties, including families, to improve and update the information available where necessary.

Recommendation 11

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to develop more formal links to a range of national and international experts to ensure that its policies, approaches, and supports on specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorder, are easily accessible, coherent, and consistent with research evidence and best practice.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes that some parents and schools are choosing to access programmes (not endorsed by the Ministry) that lack robust evidence of efficacy. An evidence-based approach is critical to ensuring positive outcomes as well as cost effectiveness.

The Ministry will continue to establish both informal and formal links to a range of national and international experts so that it can ensure the latest thinking and research evidence regarding best practice is available. The Ministry will make this advice and evidence accessible to parents and schools so they can make informed decisions about supports for students with additional learning needs.

The Ministry and the Ministry of Health have contributed to the ASD Guideline which remains the specific reference document for planning and providing interventions for students with ASD. The Ministry will incorporate specific national and international expertise in the governance and implementation of its proposed ASD Action Plan.

Recommendation 12

That the Government ensure that the Ministry of Education makes evidence regarding best practice and advice about dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorder available to parents and schools so they can make fully informed decisions when contemplating programmes.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

See Recommendation 11.

Recommendation 13

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to investigate the provision of one-stop-shop access to specialist help, which schools can offer families once students have had learning support needs identified.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

Currently students with additional learning needs get support from schools first, and then from the Ministry when more intensive specialist support is needed. However, feedback from parents has shown this can create confusion about where to go for support. For access to Ministry specialist services, parents have to apply separately for each service, which can seem like a 'series of hurdles'.

The Government notes that, together with the wider education sector, the Ministry will establish local Learning Support Teams to assess each student's needs and agree on the kind of support they need as part of the Update work programme. These teams will also provide parents and whānau with some immediate steps to take, and develop a local learning support plan with them.

As part of the Update pilot in Bay of Plenty/Wairariki¹ the Ministry is working with schools to design how to better support students through collaboration between schools, RTLB and Ministry specialists. The Update is making support easier to access through clearer processes designed around the student, not the system, bringing timely support together around the student, and using the resources currently available. The Ministry is working with schools to ensure children with identified learning needs are supported by a lead practitioner who will act as a single point of contact for parents and provide a clear avenue to access information and support, respond to questions and concerns, every step of the way. Planning is underway to ensure all children who require additional learning support have a co-ordinated plan in place.

¹ <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/specific-initiatives/special-education-update/the-learning-support-update-pilot/>

Recommendation 14

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to encourage schools to develop a plan for individual learning needs for all students identified with learning support needs.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes that under the National Administration Guidelines each board of trustees is required to:

(a) on the basis of good quality assessment information, identify students and groups of students:

- (i) who are not achieving;*
- (ii) who are at risk of not achieving;*
- (iii) who have special needs (including gifted and talented students); and*
- (iv) aspects of the curriculum which require particular attention;*

(b) develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students and aspects of the curriculum identified in (c) above;

See Recommendation 13.

Recommendation 15

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to continue to investigate working with bodies, such as the Children's Commissioner, to create a mediation and dispute-resolution model for parents and schools, which uses arbitration as a last resort.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes the Ministry has been working in partnership with the New Zealand School Trustees Association, with support from the Centre for Dispute Resolution based in the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), to develop a dispute resolution process. This process will be used where there are challenges for schools and families around individual students that cannot be resolved at a local level.

The project is being managed by a group comprising representatives of school and parent groups, and has been informed by cross-sector stakeholder workshops. It will be trialled in three Ministry regions from early 2017.

Recommendation 16

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to initiate research on the effect of innovative learning environments on students with additional learning support needs.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes the Ministry has recently published a guide on planning an Innovative Learning Environment (ILE) <http://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/ile/>. This guide summarises existing research and provides strategies and suggestions for developing ILE that work for all students. It focuses on supporting schools that are planning a new build or building modifications and includes specific information on access for students with additional learning support needs.

The Government notes the guide was presented at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Conference on Learning Environments in Auckland, November 2016.

As ILE is an expanding and growing topic the evidence base will also continue to grow including research that includes students with additional learning support needs. The Government expects that the Ministry will continue researching in this area and stay up to date with research that is being conducted both in NZ and overseas.

Recommendation 17

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to research what is needed to strengthen learning support policy, and include culturally appropriate researchers who can identify Māori, Pasifika, and refugee and migrant learning support needs.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes that there has been significant research over the last few years to understand what is effective to meet the diverse needs of Māori, Pasifika, refugee and migrant learners who need additional support and much of current practice is built on this research. The Government also notes that the Ministry will continue to regularly research, identify, review and evaluate the impact of its key learning support programmes to ensure that the needs of diverse learners, particularly Māori and Pasifika learners, are being met.

Recommendation 18

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to research what is working, and what is failing, for students with learning support needs (nationally and internationally).

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Update consultation process provided considerable evidence about what schools, families and students consider is working and what is not working. This evidence along with national and international evidence will continue to be used to inform the future direction for learning support.

The Government also notes that the New Zealand Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Guideline provides a comprehensive evidence-based approach to best practice regarding ASD. Part 3 of the Guideline, which focuses on education, provides practical information

regarding both the challenges and opportunities facing educators working with students with ASD.

Recommendation 19

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to conduct research with a Māori research organisation to look at barriers to Te Tiriti o Waitangi issues, equity issues from a Māori perspective, and recommendations for change.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

See Recommendation 17.

Recommendation 20

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to convene a process with learning support research communities to identify what research gaps exist.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

See Recommendation 18.

Recommendation 21

That the Government encourage the Ministry of Education to explore options for earlier identification, assessment, and resources for the literacy, language, and learning needs typically associated with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorder.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government agrees that early identification of learning needs is important and should take place within the first school year or, if possible, prior to school entry and continue to be undertaken by every teacher as part of their normal student assessment processes at each year level. The Government notes the Ministry is exploring options for achieving earlier identification and assessment (see Recommendation 1).

The Government notes the Ministry aims to accelerate progress in achievement so students are achieving National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics. To support this objective the Ministry aims to have teachers able to earlier identify children with learning needs typically associated with dyslexia, dyspraxia and ASD, and know how to respond to them with resources and knowledge based on best practice.

The Ministry aims to provide teachers with the best tools and resources available to identify students with dyslexia, dyspraxia and ASD early in their schooling, and provide students with evidence-based interventions, so that literacy learning is supported and not delayed.

The Government notes the Ministry is currently scoping the feasibility of extending and adapting the Learning Progression Framework (LPF) to show the finer grained progress of students learning long-term within level one of the New Zealand Curriculum (see Recommendation 1).

The Government also notes that the Early Childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki, is being updated to strengthen its bicultural content. The revised document will provide a clearer focus on identity, language and culture, and the inclusion of all students (see Recommendation 1).

Recommendation 22

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to investigate lessons from the B4 school check modelled in the State of Victoria, Australia, for learning differences such as dyslexia, which is universally applied to all schools in the state.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes that the Australian programme, Healthy Kids Check, was ceased by a previous government. The Government will task the Ministry to investigate lessons from the Healthy Kids Check, and understand the outcomes to help inform better practice in New Zealand. The Ministry will work with the Ministry of Health to inform any outcomes from lessons learnt.

The Government notes B4 School Checks are available in New Zealand free of charge to every child after they reach four years of age and before they go to school. About 93% of children participate in the B4 School Checks. A main focus of the check is to help identify any issues which may impact on a child's learning or development. These include any impacts arising from different ways a child may process information.

Recommendation 23

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to work with the Ministry of Health, as part of the Learning Support Update, on strengthening transition support for all students receiving Early Intervention services, and strengthening referral pathways for students with autism spectrum disorder and dyspraxia.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes that improving student-centred pathways is one of the Ministry's strategic intentions in its *Four Year Plan 2016-2020*.

A service design process is under way as part of the Learning Support Update pilot in the Bay of Plenty/Waiariki. Ministry of Health input is regarded as essential to this process and consideration is being given as to how relevant staff can be involved.

A Good Start in Life under the Government's Disability Action Plan seeks to improve the way the system as a whole works for parents, families and whānau with disabled children from 0-8 years old. The project is led by the Ministry in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development and ACC. The work includes:

- a child development service improvement project
- a parent, family and whānau centred design process
- action research on partnership with families.

Strengthening links with the Ministry of Health's work to improve the reach and effectiveness of Child Development Services (CDS) will support the changes proposed in the Update as CDS shares many clients and some staff with the Ministry's Learning Support (Special Education) services. This will provide an opportunity to ensure that the services are aligned, reduce the risk of duplication and ensure that workforce capability is distributed in a way that best meets the needs of children and young people.

The Government notes a number of the Update Improvement Projects focus on strengthening transition support for students receiving Early Intervention services. The Ministry advises that students in some locations are already starting to experience improvements – seamless support; less rigidity around criteria for services; and a stronger focus on immediate support for the student and the adults around the child – including parents, whānau and teachers.

Recommendation 24

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to investigate, as part of the Learning Support Update, creating targets for the timely identification of the need for, and provision of, additional support for students with learning differences.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government agrees that early identification of learning needs is important and should take place as early as possible after the presentation of need (see Recommendation 1). The Update is focussed on early support around the needs of the student and timely response with support provided regardless of the age of the student. The Update is designing details such as targets for consideration as part of national implementation.

The Government notes the Ministry currently monitors service indicators, such as wait-times for service and age of first referral to Early Intervention services.

Recommendation 25

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to work with schools and Communities of Learning on opportunities to strengthen teaching for all students, and improve access to, and coordination of, resources and services so they travel with students throughout their education pathway.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

See Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 26

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to develop further advice on the effectiveness of Reading Recovery for students identified as having dyslexia, and subsequent interventions for students who may need it.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes the Ministry aims to accelerate progress in achievement so that students are achieving National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Reading Recovery has two purposes:

- to accelerate the reading and writing progress of students who have not made expected progress in learning to read and write after one year at school
- to identify the small number of students who will need further, ongoing literacy support.

The Ministry is investigating the group of students for whom Reading Recovery appeared to be unsuccessful². It will incorporate findings from this work into any future design changes. This work will include consideration of how Reading Recovery could be deployed more effectively within CoL to support students.

Recommendation 27

That the Government require the Ministry of Education, as part of the Learning Support Update, to conduct an analysis of the demand for communication services for students with speech, language, and communication needs associated with dyslexia, dyspraxia, or autism spectrum disorder, and to make recommendations for workforce planning, and that policy is changed to meet the needs identified.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Ministry is undertaking as part of the Update an analysis of the demand for communication services for students with speech, language and communication needs associated with dyslexia, dyspraxia or ASD, and will discuss the policy implications of findings with the Minister of Education.

Recommendation 28

² In 2014 13% (equals 1,057 out of 7,952) of students who excited Reading Recovery were referred for specialist help for long term support

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to continue to work with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, and the cluster managers of Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour, to develop resources to promote good practice for access to Special Assessment Conditions (SAC).

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes the Ministry and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) reviewed SAC in 2014.

As a result of the review, a range of actions have been undertaken to improve access to SAC. The Ministry and the RTLB service have worked together with NZQA to develop resources which promote good practice accessing SAC. These have been useful for schools and have contributed to an increase in applications (see Recommendation 29).

NZQA will continue to provide regional seminars to assist RTLB in their understanding of the application process and facilitate improved knowledge of the information required for a successful application.

Recommendation 29

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to continue to work to provide more equitable access to special assessment conditions—in particular, for low-decile schools.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Ministry and the NZQA reviewed Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) in 2014 (see Recommendation 28).

As a result of the review a range of actions has been undertaken to address the issues that were identified, including the disparity in numbers of applications between schools of different decile.

RTLB are actively involved in targeting low decile secondary schools and supporting them to provide school based evidence for SAC.

The Ministry has worked with the RTLB service to develop resources which promote good practice accessing SAC. Since 2014 there has been an overall increase in access to SAC (57.6%), with the greatest percentage increase being in decile 1-3 schools (176%). There was a significant increase in the use of school-based evidence for all schools (a 330% increase) but most importantly a 522% increase in the use of school based evidence in decile 1-3 schools.

The Ministry expects the number of applications from low decile schools to continue to improve as a result of actions being taken.

NZQA monitors applications for SAC on a school-by-school and decile basis and provides data to the MOE on request. NZQA will continue to engage with and provide additional support to low decile and small schools, particularly those with low uptake of SAC.

Recommendation 30

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to support building capability for special assessment conditions staff

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Ministry will continue to work with the RTLB service to develop resources which promote good practice accessing SAC.

Recommendation 31

That the Government ensure that the Ministry of Education investigates current research on assistive technology for students with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorder, and updates its policies on effective teaching and assessment accordingly.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes championing 21st century practice in teaching and learning, and strengthening inclusion are strategic intentions in the Ministry *Four Year Plan 2016-20*.

The use of assistive technology was the most commonly reported accommodation by submitters to the inquiry. There is an upward trend in the number of students accessing assistive technology, including assistive technology funded by the Ministry of Education. Current practice is based on research and evidence about what works for individual students in their local context. The Ministry will continue to ensure that current research informs effective teaching and assessment.

Technologies available in schools enable many students to learn independently within a classroom environment using interactive, multi-sensorial tools. Technology can make it easier for all students to engage with the curriculum. Assistive technology funded by the Ministry for individual students may include devices like laptops, tablets, specialist software or hearing loops for classrooms.

As technology continues to develop and improve, it can assist a wider range of students. It is important to note that while the growth of personal devices provides an increasing range of options, the teacher's focus needs to remain on learning effectiveness, according to individual learning needs and the outcomes required.

The digital environment is transforming teaching and learning in our schools. The Government is committed to taking full advantage of this opportunity to help schools become world leaders in digital education systems through changes to their infrastructure, practices and pedagogy.

Towards Digital Fluency sets out the range of initiatives underway to ensure schools have:

- state-of-the-art ICT infrastructure
- 21st century teaching and learning
- access to quality content and resources
- equitable access to digital technologies.

The Ministry's draft vision for education in *2025 Lifelong Learners in a Connected World* shows a highly connected, interdependent education system that equips students with the skills for the future, fosters students' identity, language and culture, and prepares students to participate as successful citizens in the 21st century.

Recommendation 32

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to investigate the feasibility of a recognised qualification for Special Education Needs Coordinators.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes some schools designate teachers as Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) or Heads of Learning Support to provide advice and to coordinate the provision of additional support for students who need it.

The Ministry is working with Massey University on a proposal to develop a network of expertise for teachers and SENCOs. This will include opportunities to investigate how to better provide professional development, which may include the possibility of qualification.

Recommendation 33

That the Government task the Ministry of Education with assessing the feasibility of funding full-time, trained Special Education Needs Coordinators for schools with more than 200 students.

Response: The Government does not accept this recommendation.

The SENCO role is often an additional role undertaken by senior staff as part of their work, or a description of a staff member who has been given the portfolio for 'special needs' (see Recommendation 32). The job titles of these staff include 'SENCO', 'Head of Learning Support', 'Head of Special Needs', with a range of roles and responsibilities depending on what works for the school.

SENCOs are employed by Boards of Trustees and are funded from a variety of funds available to schools. Not all schools choose to have SENCOs or organise their resourcing in this way.

As part of the Update, the Ministry is working with schools to design how to better support students through collaboration between schools (including SENCOs), RTLB, and Ministry specialists. The Update is making support easier to access through clearer processes designed around the student, not the system, and by bringing support together around the student in a timely way and using the resources currently available. There is a strong focus on building the capability of leaders and teachers in CoL to ensure the additional learning needs of students can be met.

Recommendation 34

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to develop an information and support package for Special Education Needs Coordinators.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

See Recommendation 3. As part of the publicity drive, the Ministry will target SENCOs to ensure they have access to the necessary information and resources.

Recommendation 35

That the Government ensure that the Ministry of Education works with the Education Council to strengthen initial and ongoing teacher education to identify and respond to students' additional learning needs, particularly those associated with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorder.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes there is already a programme of work underway between the Ministry of Education and the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (Education Council) to strengthen teacher education. Further opportunities will emerge as this work continues.

The Ministry is working with the Education Council to ensure Initial Teacher Education programme requirements, and the Practising Teacher Criteria, which are currently being revised, meet the expectation that all teachers are knowledgeable in inclusive practices that support learners with diverse needs.

Recommendation 36

That the Government ensure that the Ministry of Education asks the Education Council to consider amending the Practising Teacher Criteria Key Indicators list to include "ability to create an inclusive classroom, meet the needs of students who need learning support, and access additional help where needed", as well as "(ii) select teaching approaches, resources, technologies and learning and assessment activities that are inclusive and effective for diverse ākonga".

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes the Practising Teacher Criteria are standards that teachers in New Zealand must meet in order to be issued with and renew a full practising certificate. The Education Council is currently reviewing these criteria which will be piloted over the first two terms this year, 2017. The current criteria include the following, which are particularly relevant to students with additional learning needs:

9(ii) select teaching approaches, resources, technologies and learning and assessment activities that are inclusive and effective for diverse ākonga.

9(iii) modify teaching approaches to address the needs of individuals and groups of ākonga. 12 (i) systematically and critically engage with evidence and professional literature to refine practice.

If a teacher's practising certificate is renewed, these criteria should mean they are confident in teaching students with additional learning needs. The Education Council introduced an audit of 10% of all practising certificate renewals to support lifting the quality and consistency of judgments made by professional leaders as they endorse renewals. ERO is contracted to undertake this work, and completed over 4,000 audits in the first year. The overall results and trend is pleasing. In addition, the Council has continued to provide professional development to the profession on appraisal.

Recommendation 37

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to strengthen professional development and support for teachers to identify and respond to students with additional needs, such as dyslexia, and to engage with the parents of these children.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes reading and writing are two of the priority areas for PLD for the next three to five years.

The PLD for practising teachers is currently being changed as a result of the PLD review. Changes are being implemented over a three year period from 2016-2018. Professional support that builds capability across the system to undertake teacher inquiry will be strengthened.

Building inquiry capability will support school leaders and teachers to identify students who require additional learning support to be successful students, as well as provide information about the kinds of strategies and actions they can take.

The Government will ask the Ministry to strengthen PLD and support for teachers to identify and respond to students with additional needs, such as dyslexia, and to engage with the parents of these children. This work will be incorporated into the PLD implementation work programme.

In addition the Ministry will support, develop and strengthen networks of expertise, including CoL, to enable teachers to learn from each other about effective practice (see Recommendation 4).

Recommendation 38

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to incorporate its work into strengthening professional development and support for teachers, to identify and respond to learners with additional needs, into its existing Professional Learning and Development programme.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

See Recommendation 37.

Recommendation 39

That the Government ensure that the Ministry of Education makes available professional development for specialist teachers (such as Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour and Resource Teachers: Literacy) and teacher aides to strengthen working relationships, improve role clarity, and build knowledge of inclusive practice.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes the Ministry funds clusters to provide PLD for specialist teachers.

The Government notes the Ministry provided over 340 special education study awards and scholarships for 2017. The awards and scholarships are provided each year aiming to ensure the supply of sufficient specialist teachers in the workforce to provide a quality service to children with additional learning needs.

One of the qualifications supported by the Ministry is the Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching: Autism Spectrum Disorder. This qualification develops specialist teaching skills relating to understanding, assessing, and providing education for students with ASD. *Autism Spectrum Disorders in New Zealand: Promising Practices and Interesting Issues* recently won a prize for a resource in New Zealand higher education. Finalists for this award are chosen by teachers themselves. This is a practical demonstration of the value of this resource.

The Ministry has published resources which focus on the role clarity of teachers and teacher aides, and are designed to promote effective working partnerships. The existing modules are currently being refreshed. Three new modules will be available from early 2017, alongside a new self-review tool for school leaders to support their strategic planning in using teacher aides and other learning support effectively.

CoL is strengthening working relationships and extending inclusive teaching practice between schools. The Ministry, NZEI Te Riu Roa and the NZ School Trustees Association

are engaged in joint work to developing and foster the contribution of support staff, including teacher aides, in these CoL.

Recommendation 40

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to review the alignment of specialist services, such as Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour, and Resource Teachers Literacy, and other specialist services, within Communities of Learning.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes there are currently three groups of specialist teachers who support individual students with language, literacy, learning and behaviour difficulties and their teachers: Resource Teachers: Literacy, RTLB, and Resource Teachers Māori. Each group has different governance and management arrangements. There are practice boundaries and limited cohesion between them. As CoL progress, the Ministry will review how best specialist services can be aligned within this framework.

Recommendation 41

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to investigate and lift the capability of the specialist teacher workforce, including the current capacity and capability of the specialist teacher workforce to support students with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorder in schools and Communities of Learning.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government will ask the Ministry to continue to investigate the practice of the specialist teacher workforce, including the current capacity and capability of the specialist teacher workforce to support students with dyslexia, dyspraxia and ASD across schools and CoL.

The Ministry advises that the training level of the specialist teacher workforce is variable. RTLB receive training on dyslexia within a wider focus on reading difficulties. In addition, some RTLB may have undertaken the specialist course in ASD.

Resource Teachers: Literacy do not receive specific training in dyslexia, but some may take it on themselves to undertake training in this area, or join RTLB for training.

Resource Teachers: Māori do not receive explicit training in these areas – however some may take it on themselves to undertake training in this area, or may join RTLB for training.

Recommendation 42

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to ensure that Special Education Needs Coordinators' training and professional development focus on creating a school culture of inclusion, and providing advice about access to additional services, including assisting with Ongoing Resourcing Scheme applications alongside families.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The proposed recommendation is consistent with current policy and practice. Some SENCOs have access to PLD that promotes inclusive education through their local SENCO networks. Some SENCOs have also been involved in a national programme of Inclusive Education workshops to introduce the Inclusive Practice tools and the Inclusive Education resources on Te Kete Ipurangi. The Ministry anticipates CoL will provide opportunities to develop strong collaborative expertise among SENCOs/Learning Support Coordinators.

Recommendation 43

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to work with Communities of Learning on opportunities to use expertise in multiple schools.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government agrees one of the most significant things we can do within schools to raise student achievement, is to support and lift the quality of teaching.

Teaching improves when teachers discuss and consider the effectiveness of what they do for their individual students, and plan their teaching based on that. CoL provide a way to widen the pool of teachers with the skills and knowledge to do this well.

The Government agrees there are opportunities to help schools make better use of their SENCO resource (see Recommendation 34). These include developing an information and support package that will bring together all the information SENCOs need for effective practice. In addition there is an opportunity for schools in a CoL to pool their SENCO resource so that individual schools who may not have a dedicated SENCO could still access a SENCO 'shared' across the CoL.

The opportunities for CoL to collaborate to share expertise and resources are being actively pursued by the Ministry.

Recommendation 44

That the Government require the Ministry of Education to continue to build sector capability that includes autism spectrum disorder-specific content, inclusive practice, and curriculum planning.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

Resources to build teacher capability have been made available online on the Inclusive Education website and on the Curriculum Online website (see Recommendation 3). This content includes ASD-specific information for educators, as well as information about inclusion, curriculum planning, and progress and achievement. ASD-specific study awards are available for a range of educational professionals each year.

The Ministry continues to collaborate with the Ministry of Health to fund Tips for Autism, which is a three-day course for teams that support students with ASD aged 5–12 years. The Ministry also jointly funds ASD Plus with the Ministry of Health. This is an initiative to increase parents' knowledge and skills to support their pre-school children with ASD. Participation in these programmes is voluntary for teachers and parents.

Resources to build teacher capability have been made available online on the Inclusive Education and the New Zealand Curriculum Online websites. This content includes ASD-specific information for educators, as well as information about inclusion, curriculum planning, progress, and achievement.

ASD-specific study awards are available for a range of educational professionals each year. Resources have also been developed so that Ministry teams and RTLB clusters continue to support school staff to access other PLD about ASD.

Recommendation 45

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to review its autism spectrum disorder action plan in response to the updated New Zealand Autism Spectrum Disorder Guideline.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government notes that, although the Ministry of Health has overall responsibility for reviewing the guideline, it is a shared initiative with the Ministry of Education. The Ministry is currently reviewing its ASD action plan and is planning to convene a cross sector, multi-agency working group to identify opportunities and provide advice regarding implementation of the ASD Guideline.

The Government acknowledges that any response to the challenges and opportunities which autism present needs to include people with ASD themselves, their families and whanau, multiple Government agencies, and other organisations supporting people with ASD.

Recommendation 46

That the Government task the Ministry of Education to work with parents, the Ministry of Health, and Autism NZ to review information resources for parents.

Response: The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Ministry will prioritise a review of information resources. The Government notes a Disability Information and Advisory Service, *Altogether Autism*, is funded through the Ministry of Health and will contribute to the review.